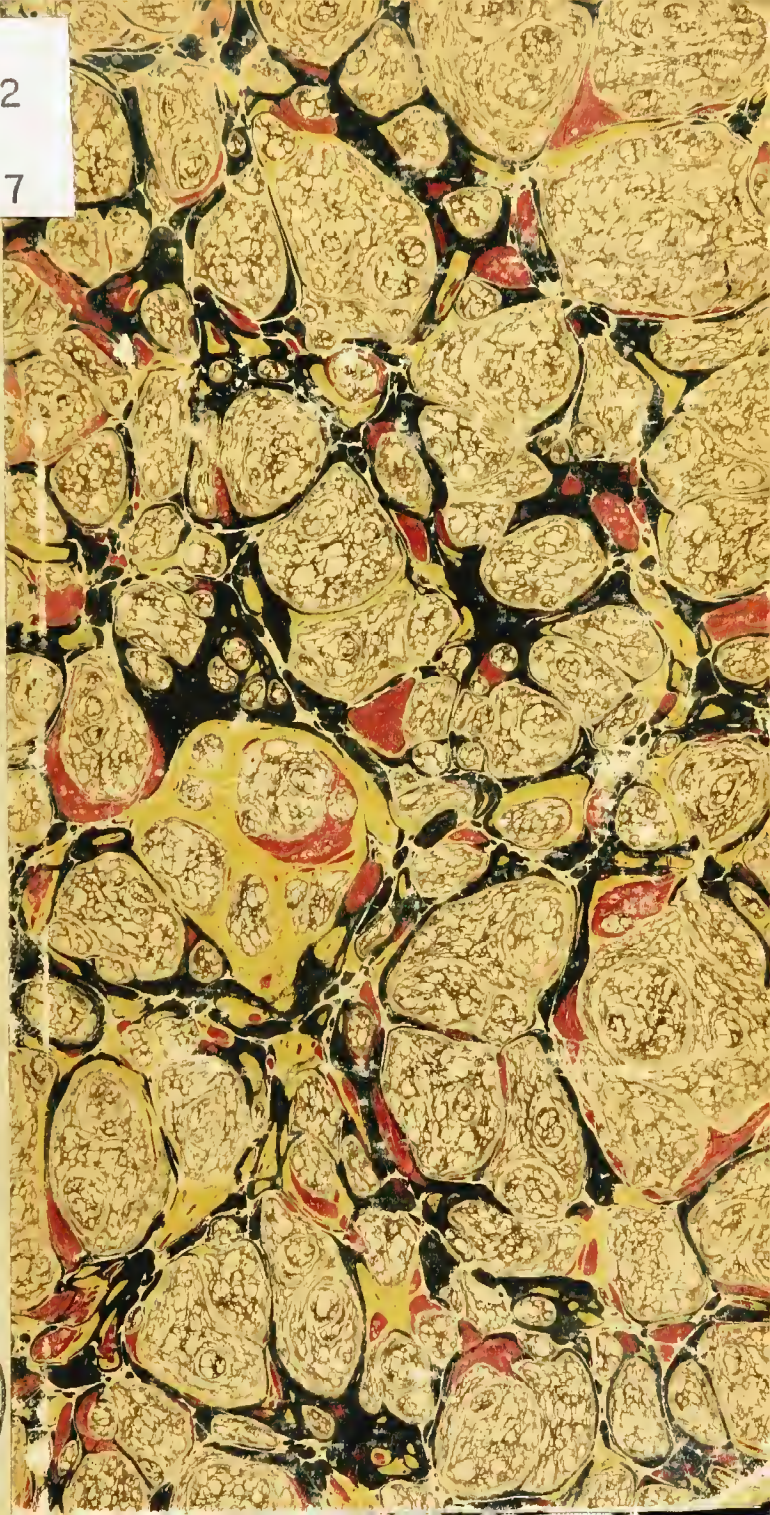


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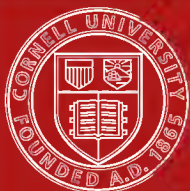
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SERIES A.

No. I.

POEMS IN PROSE AND VERSE.

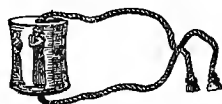
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TORQUATO TASSO.
(ALESS. ALLORI).

LATER WORK OF
TORQUATO TASSO
RENDERED INTO ENGLISH VERSE
ALSO A SHORT ESSAY
AFFINITIES TASSIAN AND MILTONIC
BY
HENRY CLORISTON

PUBLISHED BY THE POSTAL
LITERARY ALLIANCE



1907

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TOWER HILL, E.C.

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TO ARTEMIS.

MISTRESS, to thee, from an unsullied mead
This woven garland of its flowers, I bring ;
It is a virgin meadow where, in Spring,
No shepherd ever dares his flock to lead ;
Yet there the honey-bee
Loiters, and Purity
With river dews the grass doth nightly tend.
They that are pure in thought alone may wend
That unshorn mead along,
And gather sweets, or the chaste fragrance breathe ;
Discerned of none who does, or suffers, wrong.
These flowers, so culled, O goddess, grant that I,
With hallowed hand, about thy tresses wreath ;
For in thy grace secure
I speak with thee, and hear thee ; though mine eye
See not thy living form : converse thus pure,
And sweet, be ours ; and till my death endure !

EURIP. HIP.

THE NATIVITY.

Mira devotamente, alma pentita,
Un tempio augusto e grande
E le nove opre in lui del novo Sisto.

POOR penitent, my spirit, come
And gaze devoutly round thee on this shrine,
Where the new Sixtus newly doth convene
Tall column, soaring arch and pictured dome :
Where the sun's rays benign
Welcome this happy day with gladsome mien :
This day is born, this day apparent, seen,
The visible semblance of the invisible God,
Who of Himself and with His Spirit made
This earth : the same
Whom Moses saw in flame :
Who smote the Egyptian when in pride arrayed ;

CANZONE

Pel presepio di Nostro Signore
nella capella di Sisto V. in
S. Maria Maggiore.

And traced the ocean path which Israel trod :
The God of Hosts, of spoil, of victory,
Who gives, and takes away :
Heaven's King, who rules on high,
Shown to our eyes, in His own Son, this day.

But why thus shown, and how
Divinity with human substance joined ;
And what was hidden, what made evident
To sight or reason He alone can know
Who the great work designed.
My thought soars not so high ; though duly bent
In reverence, and awe, and long attent,
To study Nature and the works and ways,
So wondrous, that surround us : but no mind,
Whom earthly fetters bind,
Though led to truth, and swift to utter praise,
Can pierce the crystal that enshrines above
The Flower of endless Love ;
Or tell why, in a world perverse and vile,
A semblance of that Flower should sometimes smile ;
Or how a Virgin bore a son,
Or why a King so frail a form put on.

Here to my earnest thought,
Heaven opens, and the glory of that night
Renews itself in me. The skies are gay
With forms angelical, part overwrought
With radiance snowy white,
Beams of glad promise that outshine the day.

The rugged shepherds, by their flocks who stay,
Wake to the sight, and to the unwonted sound
Of Angel harps, that shake the midnight air.
There too the humble hostel hidden lies,
Remote from worldly eyes,
Of Night in starry state the jealous care ;
Who gathers reverently her shadows round.
Within, the Ox and Ass attend beside
The old man at the birth long prophesied :
Lo! in what poor estate
She dwells whom all so soon will venerate :
While in the wonder of a virgin birth
Heaven's miracles excel not this on earth.

Yet more, clear to my eyes,
I see, or seem to see, in every sphere
Of Heaven and Earth His glory magnified :
War's hideous rapine, lusts and cruelties,
Symbols and signs of fear,
Trumpets and standards, engines gaping wide
With murder, now no more with us abide.
Nor betwixt men alone shall discord cease,
And Janus' fabled gates fast locked remain ;
But with this holy birth and glad beginning,
He who our grace is winning,
Has on Himself all sin and sorrow ta'en ;
And between God and Man is stable Peace.
Nor shall the old enemy disturb His reign
Who, at man's overthrow, gave presage sure

Our loss should not endure ;
And opens to our feet, where'er we dwell,
Steps up to Heaven—a pathway out from Hell.

Mute is Apollo now,
Silent his cave, his spring; the gods proved vain
Whose death erewhile he had in song foretold.
Dodona's Oaks sigh to all winds that blow,
But answer not again ;
The Spirit stilled that breathed therein of old,
Quenched by the doom our sacred books enfold :
Lies Ammon prone upon the billowy waste
Of Libyan plains, where desert tempests sweep,
And sands more dread than waters surge around :
Her yoke of pards unbound,
Sad Dindymene may no longer keep
High festival, and antique honours taste ;
Her Corybants no more on Ida's steep
Or Phrygian mead, or top of Cretan hill,
Lament in accents shrill :
Anubis barks not now, his temples bare ;
Nor bellows Apis at the altar stair.

That truth shown dimly forth
In the first writings, a new light has been—
Light which is light of the Eternal Light.
Run all ye peoples, East, West, South and North,
Follow this star serene
Which to the Master guides your wandering sight ;
Kneel with these kings, your gifts with theirs unite,

Kneel with them to your King, though death be nigh ;
Bring gold and frankincense, and fragrant myrrh :
Watch with these shepherds ; let not theirs exceed
Your tardy heavenward speed :
Bring all that kindles mind with purest fire ;
Even with the angels in rejoicement vie !
Crowned, sit ye in their choir,
That earthly tongues, with theirs, a hymn of praise
And love and joy may raise :
For now, through God in man, to man, thus given,
Heaven stoops to Earth and Earth soars up to Heaven.

Sixtus, if in thy thought
These sacred images the spirit lift
To admiration of celestial things,
Haply the hand that brings
This hymn in want of a more costly gift,
Some echoings of that early strain hath caught
Borne through the midnight air on Angel wings :
Pearls have I none, nor frankincense, nor myrrh ;
Statues, nor gems—so lay this offering here.

ROME, *December, 1588.*

THE HOLY CROSS.

*Alma inferma, e dolente,
Che si diverse cose intendi e miri.*

SAD and ailing, spirit mine,
So fond to flit o'er sea and sky
And con this strange earth wistfully ;
Seek not above,
With curious glance, where Bear and Dragon shine,
Heroic form or Zodiac sign ;
From thy sad thought all vain deceits remove :
Heavy with sense of doom,
Here let us come,
Where there is saving grace and endless love,
To-day, while feebly gleam
This languid light, this tearful beam.

Dark and dolent, spirit mine,
In pain and penitence look up ;
Look in His face who drank the cup
Of mortal suffering ;
Think on His sorrow, not on thine ;
Think, o'er this earth, how wide His trophies shine ;
Behold the mount whence heavenward He took wing—
The head in anguish bent,
And thorns with blood besprent,
Crowned on the Cross behold the Eternal King !
To-day, while sadly gleam
This languid light, this tearful beam.

Weeps not the Sun this day ?
 Weeps not the World, weeps Nature not with Him ?
 Who would not weep, this day, so wan and dim—
 Thou, spirit, more than all ?
 What tide of tears, what sun with darked ray,
 Or moan of gathering storm, in sighs, shall pay
 Enough of brine, of gloom, of sobs ? Who would not pall
 His heart in sorrow now,
 Before that awful brow,
 And sights and signs of grief around him call ?
 Who but of Heaven will deem
 This languid light, this tearful beam ?
 List to the impious din,
 The shout, the jeer, the hammer-stroke of guilt ;
 Know that the tears so shed, the blood thus spilt
 Still flow for thee :
 Even yet resound around thee and within
 The words of anguish that redeem thy sin ;
 His Cross, His Tomb, caused by thy guilt to be :
 List to the pitying voice
 Of those who make this choice,
 Who share His Crown, His painful Majesty—
 The Saints whom well beseem
 This languid light, this tearful beam.
 Soul, let us also die
 With Him, and nail our faults upon this tree ;
 With Him that we may dwell perpetually.
 If for man's earthly need
 The Vine, the Figtree and the Palm supply
 Rich produce, sweet to taste, fair to the eye ;

Will not this loftier growth, whereof the seed
Is Word of God ; whose root
Is in man's heart ; bear fruit
Most fair, whereon all living things shall feed,
And blossom best where gleam
This languid light, this tearful beam ?

God's perfect med'cine this,
Which shall thy sickness and thy sick thoughts cease ;
The plant whose sap is life, whose fruit is peace :
Here seek, so Faith compelleth,
The health, strength, hope and comfort that are His,
And shall be ours when all infirmities
Are washed from us away as His Word telleth :
Bleed, suffering heart ; lay bare
Thy wounds, and share
The healing stream that from His substance wellet ;
To-day, and when this dream
Is passed, light shall be thine,
A tearless beam.

(Good Friday, 1590,

MONTE OLIVETO,
SIENA.)

MADRIGAL.

CHIEDE' AITA A CRISTO.

“Vedi, Padre del Ciel, che dolce raggio
D'occhi soavi, e rei . . .”

BEHOLD how soft, how sweet, the light,
Alluringly, that leads astray,
Of glossy tress and glances bright :
Look down upon these gardens dight
With flowers that hem the broader way :
There see how smooth, how white,
The hand that drew the net so subtly spread :
On me thus erring shed,
Father, a kindly ray
To guide me, that my feet may find
Thine own straight path : these toils unbind,
If from offence so deep Heaven's grace can free !
Thy Cross, my sin, make present to my mind,
And turn my steps to Thee.

LIGHT.

PASSAGES FROM THE "FIRST DAY" OF IL MONDO CREATO.

O bellissima luce, o luce amica
Della natura e della mente umana,
Della divinità serena immagine
Che ne consoli e ne richiami al cielo.

Solerti. *Vita di Tasso.* p. 720.

I have already alluded to the arrival of John Milton in Naples where he was entertained by Manso

Milton knew our language and had even composed verses in Italian ; is it possible that Manso should not have spoken to him of the "Mondo Creato," and that he should not have read it? "Paradise Lost" begins where Tasso finished : possibly the first idea flashed upon Milton beneath the same sky, perhaps in the same house, where Tasso had begun to write. The latter was unable to give the last touches to his own poem ; but how admirably the former transfused its substance into his own divine nature !

See also p. 719, observations on blank verse in Italian.

Also p. 578, causes of imprisonment chiefly political.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE passages from Tasso's last, and in some respects, most able work, *Il Mondo Creato*, here selected for translation, relate principally to light, and are contained in the first book. In all there are seven books, one being assigned to each day of the Creation, while the seventh shows the end for which man was created ; but the work as a whole is in an unfinished state, and must be looked on as an experiment (in Italian) Tasso having discarded the assistance of rhyme, probably considering *ottavarima* hardly compatible with the dignity of his subject, and not caring to walk in the steps of Dante.

There is intense pathos attaching to these passages which clearly owe their origin to the writer's sequestration from sunlight for long periods during his imprisonment on a charge of insanity at St. Anne's, which lasted in all nearly eight years. No better answer to this charge could be wished than that after so complete an overthrow of all hope of material prosperity, in danger, poverty and ill-health, he was able still to maintain his faith in divine goodness and to indite a song of praise and thanksgiving which, in the completed portion, gives ample evidence of perfect mental balance.

Tasso was engaged on this work when he died in 1595. The first edition of Viterbo is dated 1607.

GIORNATA PRIMA

(DEL MONDO CREATO).

FATHER of Heaven, and Thou, Eternal Son—
Son uncreated—of the Eternal Father,

Only begotten of the Immutable Mind ;
And divine image of divine perfection,

5. Thyself perfection, flame of purest flame :

And Thou, of both these spirits, both these splendours,
Or of this two-fold splendour, Fervid Spirit,
And likewise sacred light and sacred flame—

Pure stream from purest fountain welling forth—
In whom, if it become me so to say,

The first high model refuls himself :

Thou, Triple Sun, Lord, Messenger and Bond,
Three holy essences in one conjoined,

Fire in the hearts, light in the minds of men :

God, not aloof, in whom all things unite,

Straight to diffuse themselves again abroad,

Thyself the high completion of thy will :

Thou, Divine Love, from Father and from Son

Descend in me, and host within my heart,

And bring heaven's grace, and thought and song inspire,

That I may sing this first and highest work

By Thee accomplished, which shines forth in Thee,

Most marvellous, and the fair workmanship

Of this created world, this six days' task.

27. Teach me, Thou, that compellest movement and space,
A thousand spheres, and Time itself to turn

As on an axis, subject to thy will !
And may I also sing that seventh day's rest,
Eternal peace and gladsome quietude,
Unlike the hasty emulous joys of Earth,
Which Thou dost promise, and one day wilt grant.
Meanwhile, if peace so deep with me may dwell,
Here, in this stillness where I age and weep,
May I have earnest of the time to come,
The recompense that bids my heart be glad.
Show to me, then, the cause of this new world,
Thou, the first, only, and eternal cause
Of each created thing ere yet began
The course of centuries, swift and voluble.
Show what first moved Thee, whom no power can move,
Supernal Energy, to this strange work
Once newly manifest, now hoar in age,
Sustaining still thy primal, antique, laws
Whereby the various hues and forms around
Are to our senses wondrously revealed.
Tell me, ere then, what work or what repose,
Divinely ordered was there, or could be,
In thy eternity of blissful being :
What model the Celestial Artist took
When he would build this palace, kingly dight,
This temple resonant with his high praise.
Reveal it, Thou that knowest, distinct and clear,
That work, art, manner may through me be shown.
Thou art the hand, O Lord, and I the harp,
Which struck by thee will ring with sweet accords,
Silent without thee ! Let it then resound,

Duteous, in praise of thy mirific will.
Lord, give me strength to utter this new song,
That from the Tiber to the frozen Rhine,
From Arno to the Ister or the Don—
Or where the king of turbulent rivers flows—
No ear may be so deaf, no heart so dead,
So sheathed in adamant, but will attend.

78. Before God made the earth, and made the skies,
There were not many gods, and many kings,
Discordant, battling round the unborn world :
And not alone in an eternal silence,
And darkness, dwelt the Father of all good ;
But with his Son and with the Holy Spirit :
Then had he in Himself his seat and kingdom,
Of thought-created worlds the absolute King :
For divine thought is work, nor hath He need
Of servant, minister or instrument,
Or scene of triumph, in whom all glory shines,
And all that was, or will be, is involved.
But none can show, nor understand if shown,
How in itself and of itself the Word
Was generant through eternity—the mode
And due fulfilment of the Ineffable Birth,
And coming of the Son in equal power.
Silent are now the fables told in Greece
Of Coelus, Saturn, and a race of gods
Discrowning or discrowned ; the monstrous wars
Of Giants ; tales of vanquished Titans chained
In tenebrous night of Tartarus profound ;

And of usurping Jove, the unjust son,
Stained with paternal outrage ; fabulous gods
Who wielded shield and spear ; of Ops and Dis,
Yelping Anubis, and the darkness bred
In Egypt, which obscured the antique world.

Not in such darkness shall this song be heard
(If I be worthy) while I sing of light,
The eldest born of God's prolific mind

115. T'ward which the mind of man vainly aspires.
Not yet were plain and forest ; from the ground
Not yet had the first fountains broken forth ;
Nor mountains reared their heads ; nor rivers flowed
When of his glory God created light.
With him was light when, of this universe,*
He cast in adamant the outward sphere ;
With him, when in the heavens he set the stars,
And made the deep of waters flow around ;
When, too, he fixed a limit to the sea,
And gave its waves his law. When he convened
The elements that should sustain our earth
Light made his labour joy ; and in his mansion
Was ever with him ere he willed this world,
Ere seasons, varying years, and Time began.

161. And God is good, and fountain of all good,
Which in its nature is communicable,

*Tasso (and Milton, with some hesitation) believed the visible universe to consist of a series of concentric spheres encompassing the earth. Heaven and the Empyrean, Chaos and Hell were external to this

- And interpenetrates and spreads around ;
 And light which dwelt with God, who is all good,
 Became infused with his pervading essence ;
 Whence, in all forms which light makes visible
 Some semblance of divinity appears.
180. Nor is there any living thing so mean,
 So abject in its nature, form or use,
 That crawls or runs, or grovels in the slime,
 Or clings to rocks lashed by the rough sea waves,
 Or glides unnoticed through the pervious earth,
 In which there is not shown, to all who seek,
 The wondrous art of his eternal Master
 Who out of nothing made substance and form.
 Wherein was high occasion for this world,
 Which in itself unnumbered ends fulfils,
 And infinite progress—in no niggard mood
 So to dispense His gifts that all may praise ;
 For as in heaven among the starry quires
 His praise continually resounds, so here
 Is it one use and purpose of all being
 To utter songs of praise and sacrifice
 And adorations consecrate to God.
211. So from that state which is Eternity
 God brought forth Time, which ends and has begun,
 As from some inland sea or Alpine lake
 Sphered in itself, deep, silent and unmoved,
 Issues a babbling stream ; and space and measure
 Were given to that which has been and shall be.

Here follows a discourse concerning the origin of time, the limits of the universe, *fiammeggianti mura*, and other matters connected with Creation; the author concluding that God depicts himself in everything. Earth rising out of Chaos is thus described :—

388. Darkly emergent was the earth, and bare,
Newly created, void and unadorned ;
Like some vast theatre with empty seats,
Unfurnished—none to act or to applaud.
Her children yet unborn, their wretched eyes
Saw not the horror of that dreadful waste,
Those mountainous solitudes and untilled plains.
No tree umbrageous tresses had unbound
To make a pleasant shade among the hills ;
Nor shrub put forth its leaves ; nor in the fields
Had Hyacinth and Narcissus, and their kin,
Mingled soft colours with the herbs and grass,
Or sprung in garlands round the limpid pools.
Like one astounded, Mother Earth, in dread,
Seemed cowering from the dreadful face of things,
Her members all unsightly and unformed
Sunk in black waters, or with darkness veiled.
Not yet the splendour of the sky was shown
In gay attire of gold and azure dressed,
And lucent signs ; not yet the sun had lit
His ardent lamp, nor moon in humbler state
Opposed to him her silvery horn, or found
The steep and devious path she nightly treads.
Unheard was that first heavenly harmony,

The carol of the fixed and wandering stars,
Nor wore the Night her crown. In such aspect
422. The nascent world hid from herself in awe.

(Here follows a discourse on the origin of evil.)

489. Then was Eternal Light before the world,
And before darkness which involves the world,
Light which illumines the mind serenely blest—
The senses, no ; but that which governs sense.
Light seen is but the semblance of this light ;
Semblance, that takes some glory from its model ;
Model, whereof the sun is but a ray.
Light uncreated was before the world ;
Haply created light, through countless ages,
Through centuries by centuries multiplied,
Was also shining ere this world began.
But like eternities (to use such phrase)
Preceded still the world, also the time
In which the second splendours were created
From the First Splendour—Angels sanctified.
But heavenly Princes, Virtues, Dignities,
Glorious, immortal armies of the Elect,
Dwelt not in what to all but One seemed dark.
Hence, with the birth of first *created* minds
Was there *created* light. In joy and song
They dwelt within that light which was their joy
As He who is both light and being dwells ;
Singing together in a sacred rounde,
With sacrifice of reverence and praise.
This is the light which, by the ancient Fathers

Was promised to the just—immortal light
Which shall be theirs for ever. But the wicked
In pain and outer darkness have their part.

525. So in the darkness of the black abysses,
And on the waters, moved the Divine Spirit
Preparing humid nature for her task :
Breathing down force and virtue on the waves
In manner of a bird that brooding sits,
Who, with her vital warmth, from a frail shell
Draws forth the callow offspring yet unformed.
And said : Let there be light : and Word of God
Is work accomplished ! Of itself, the air,
Scarce waiting for the sound of loosened tongues,
Felt and obeyed the impulse of his thought ;
Moved by his Holy Will—the inward Word.
540. Thus the first Voice, and first command made light ;
Clear, pure and splendid light, God's instant gift,
Upgathered the first day, but, with the fourth,
Divided, and to separate seats assigned.
Hid Horror her gaunt face ; darkness dispersed,
Left visible the sombre earth ; the sky
Wore a first smile of welcome to the dawn
And radiantly his changeful tints disclosed ;
On every side North, South, and East, and West,
All quarters of the world were steeped in light ;
In light, most beautiful, which to our eyes,
And hearts, brings swift intelligence of heaven ;
Light that consoles, and heals ; our friend, our guide,
The joy of Nature ; of Earth, Sea, and Air ;
Of Mind and Sense ; and, scarcely still to prove,
554. Of things that perish and of things eterne.

TORQUATO TASSO.

“ E'n qual ignota parte, e'n qual idea
Era l'esempio tuo, Celeste Fabro,
Quando facesti a te la reggia e'l tempio? ”

HEAVENWARD with thee ! the palace of our King,
Vaguely, at unimaginable height,
Seems domed above me in this ardent flight
My spirit dares, borne on thy mightier wing :
And were it meet that soul to soul should bring
Incense of praise, what joy, so to requite
Thy aid ! but to the Fountain of all Light
Humbly thou bidst me bear this offering.
What have our masters, what hath learning done
To make thy faith and hope a thing of yore ;
And dim the light that fed thy inward eye ?
Then may all hope through grace to reach that shore
Where *then*, and *now*, and *will be* are as one ;
And in that knowledge let me live and die.

VIRGIL.

THE FOURTH ECLOGUE.

POLLIO.*

SING we, Sicilian Maids, some loftier theme ;
For lowly tamarisks delight not all,
Nor vineyards : if Bucolic strains we raise,
Be those strains worthy of a Consul's ear.

The
ordained
cycle of
events, now
complete,
begins again.

4. Now is the last age of Cumæan song ;
The ordered eras their great course renew ;
Returns Astræa ; Saturn's reign returns ;
And a new progeny is sent from heaven.
Oh! be propitious to the infant boy
Beneath whom first this iron age shall cease
And o'er the earth an age of gold arise,
Chaste goddess, now thy own Apollo reigns.

The coming
of the Babe.

- I I. Thou Pollio, too, while lasts thy civic reign,
This glory of our age shall ingress make,
And the great months begin their grand progression.
Under thy rule whatever guilt remain,
Absolved; shall free the earth from fear for ever.
He shall partake the life of gods ; himself
See heroes, and with gods and heroes dwell ;
Seen of them, and so rule the peaceful world,
Great as his sires !

* This Eclogue is added to facilitate comparison with the Messianic Ode of Tasso.

Endure the harrow ; nor shall vineyard suffer
 A pruner's blade. The sturdy ploughman frees
 His oxen of their yoke. No longer wool
 Acquires unnatural dyes ; the ram shall tinge
 His fleece with blushing purple in the fields ;
 Or saffron tints, and fainter crimson clothe,
 Spontaneously, young fatlings as they feed.

The Fates
 ordain.

46. The Fates, harmonious, to their spindles sang :
 Run on, ye ages, thus : accordant so
 With Destiny.

Virgil
 addresses
 the Babe.

49. Dear child of gods, the germ
 And promise of a mighty Jove to be,
 Go forth in progress on thy glorious way.
 The time is now at hand. Behold the World,
 How with its convex weight it looks to thee—
 Earth, the vast tract of sea, and deep of heaven !
 Lo ! all things joy at coming of this age.

And desires
 prolonged
 life that he
 may sing his
 divine acts.

53. Oh ! may the last term of my life endure,
 And breath suffice to tell thy deeds. Not then
 Shall Thracian Orpheus vanquish me in song ;
 Nor Linus : these should either parent aid !
 Orpheus, Calliope ; Linus, Apollo.
 Though Pan himself contend with me, even Pan,
 Arcadia judge, shall judge himself o'erthrown.
60. Sweet babe, with thy sweet smile, begin to know
 Thy mother ; she felt many a pang for thee.
 Begin so to bring back thy mother's smile.
 To him who has not won this kind regard
 No goddess dressed her bed, nor god his board.

AFFINITIES.

TASSIAN AND MILTONIC.

NOTE.

THE apparent miracle of the production of *Paradise Lost* becomes, if not less wonderful, perhaps a little more comprehensible when we consider that, in some measure, it is the work of two kindred and astonishingly sympathetic minds ; approximately of equal power and lucidity, equally devotional, and equally earnest to make the art in which they excelled a medium of approach to Divine Truth.

Milton sets himself to “justify the ways of God to man”—in other words, to give an account of the conflict between the powers of good and evil and the incidents of “the fall.” In the version which he presents, the character and attributes of Satan and of our unhappy progenitors (the Human and the infernal elements in the story) are essentially his own. But a scene was required wherein the tremendous events about to be described should take place ; and this he found ready to his hand, carefully thought out and poetically rendered—yet owing to its unfinished state not dangerously competitive—in the work from which the foregoing extracts have been made. The greater part of what Raphael relates (B.VII.) concerning the creation of the world—also the general conception of Heaven and the occupations of its inhabitants, *apart from the revolt*—may be found in, or inferred from, the earlier poem ; and many little decorative touches, such as the comparison of the foliage of a tree or shrub to human tresses, or of the Divine Spirit brooding on the abyss to a bird sitting on her nest, will also be met with. The conception of Light as mystically

identical with the essence of Divinity, a conception which will always be regarded as Miltonic, had also been borne in on the mind of Tasso during his seclusion in the Hospital of St. Anne, and found powerful expression in the first book of his strangely neglected work—a work which the author is said to have valued more than any other; his great ambition having been to produce a strictly religious poem.

With regard to this borrowing on Milton's part, everyone conversant with the literature (and art) of the period is well aware that no ethical reproach whatever is involved. A kind of custom apparently then prevailed for fellow labourers in the attack on obscurantism to get all the aid they could from each other, the important point being that the work should be good. Public interest in having the best that could be produced may have been held to outweigh proprietary rights.

It seems therefore pretty clear that Milton gladly availed himself of the assistance of a forerunner and co-worker who, together with Spenser and Ovid, was one of his most cherished literary companions, and a writer who, in his epic of the First Crusade, had invested chivalry with a charm it had never before worn. We may further surmise that Milton discovered peculiar appropriateness in allowing one who had been his guide to so much that is delicate and ethereal in imaginative art (the "affable familiar ghost" mentioned by Shakespeare, as some think) to speak in the person of the Angel Raphael, whose skill in narrative and agreeable address he sets in so pleasing a light.

The late Dr. Garnett in his well known survey of Italian literature states that *Il Mondo Creato* is of considerable interest because of its manifest influence on the author of *Paradise Lost* in "style and versification," and anyone able to read the book in the original will at once see the resemblance. Unfortunately for Tasso he adopted blank verse, in narrative poetry, too late to be able to bring this medium of expression to absolute perfection; although there are plenty of lines and sentences which have the right ring. On the other hand, the work is a rich mine of dignified and highly poetical words and phrases, which at once suggest their English equivalents, and throughout the tone and manner are perfect.

Like some derelict vessel whose crew have all perished, *Il Mondo Creato* was discovered by a fortunate seafarer, able to save the precious freight and to enhance its value in many ways, but chiefly by considering it worthy to be added to his own stock—a legitimate transaction, but entirely different from the act of creation required for the rest of the work.

II.

What constitutes the allowable in the matter of mutual indebtedness between great artists, and their interdependence in the cause they serve, have, in the past, been very thoroughly "discoursed" upon. On the whole, it seems that when the assistance thus derived is merely occasional, or essentially decorative, or, to confine ourselves to the literary side of the question, when some "jewel five words long," more or less, is rescued from comparative obscurity and given

the relief that it deserves, the fact is of small general interest and readers may be left to make these rather trivial discoveries themselves. Except for the purpose of illustration, no critic, however captious, would (not to depart from our author) be likely to point out that "light fantastic" occurs first in Drayton; "night raven" in Spenser; "gorgeous East" in *Love's Labour Lost*; for in all these cases the value of the phrase is enormously enhanced by its new environment. Moreover, it would be difficult to bring forward many important instances of adoption from the same sources.

On the other hand, the indebtedness to Tasso is habitual, affecting both the thing said and the manner of saying it, and therefore stands on an altogether different footing. Unquestionably *allowable* because of the magnificent result achieved, and, when properly understood, a subject for praise and congratulation, but also of extreme interest and proper for enquiry, partly on account of its psychological aspect.

Dryden, in his preface to the "Fables," says:—

"Spenser and Fairfax both flourished in the reign of Queen Elizabeth: great masters in our language, and who saw much farther into the beauties of our numbers than those who immediately followed them. Milton was the poetical son of Spenser, for we have our lineal descents and clans as well as other families. Spenser more than once insinuates that the soul of Chaucer was transfused into his body and that he was begotten by him two hundred years after his decease. Milton has acknowledged to me that Spenser was his original."

Putting aside the fantastic notion with regard to Chaucer, if Milton be the poetical son of Spenser he is clearly the grandson of Tasso, for the *Fairie Queene* is full of literal renderings from the *Gerusalemme*. In fact, only a short time ago a critic in "The Times," wishing to select a favourable example of Spenser's genius, quoted two stanzas so translated. But in reality the relationship is more direct.

Towards the close of the reign just named, Fairfax published his version of Tasso's most popular book, the *Gerusalemme Liberata*. In this version the sense is, as a rule, faithfully given, but it is a free and elegant rendering, and, while making no claim to originality, contains work which has much of the merit of original verse. Fairfax is so completely in sympathy with his author that he frequently carries the thought a little further than the text warrants, but generally with very happy effect. He seems also to have had some appreciation of the humorous side of things—a faculty denied both to Tasso and Milton—and very competent judges have hesitated as to whether they would give preference to the work in its English or Italian dress. At any rate, this translation abundantly proves how inspiring Tasso's numbers may become when thoroughly assimilated by a sympathetic English mind—a fact that must have been known to the author of *Paradise Lost*, to whom the translation would have been as familiar as the original, and who neglected no means towards the attainment of absolute perfection in the art which he had made his own.

III.

Dr. Johnson, in the course of his "Life," points out that "Milton being well versed in the Italian poets appears to have borrowed often from them," and suggests that he took the hint of using blank verse in epic poetry from the same source ; but, with the one exception we are considering, this indebtedness seems to have been only general, or not very significant.

To the learned Doctor we also owe the often quoted phrase, "Milton was a lion that had no skill in dandling a kid," and, again, "Milton could hew a colossus out of a rock, but could not cut heads on cherry stones."

Both these appreciations, although they correspond fairly well to our idea of the man—Puritan, iconoclast and republican—appear hardly adequate when applied to the poems, abounding as they do in soft and delicate touches and every variety of graceful treatment ; and surprise has been expressed that so uncouth a controversialist could have written them. Fortunately, in those days no universal genius sat on the Woolsack, or the door might have been opened to a new Baconian heresy ! Perhaps the true explanation should be sought in some mental or psychic process resembling the familiar operation of grafting.

There can be no doubt that, from temperament and training, Milton was continually impelled to rigorous self-examination. Even his prose works show intense self-consciousness. He must, therefore, have early become aware of the principal defect which, almost of necessity, accompanied

the virile qualities he owed to nature, and to his essentially Saxon temperament. (The more spontaneous and abundant gift of song accorded to Shakespeare and Spenser probably came with a strong infusion of Keltic blood.) In the ordinary conduct of affairs, and in his prose compositions, the bent of his disposition might, considering the hardness of the times, be allowed to assert itself without much inconvenience ; but in an art which, above all, requires mansuetude and a sympathetic regard for things fragile and evanescent, as well as the loftier aspects of human existence, some kind of *regeneration* was necessary. Although deeply interested in politics and religion, it was by poetry that Milton meant to prevail ; and he seems to have set himself by sheer force of intellect to acquire tenderness and sympathy. Doubtless it was with this object in view that he devoted so much study to Ovid, for there is much in the author of the *Art and Remedy of Love* to jar on his rigid Puritanism. On the contrary, there is nothing of Pagan indifference to the ideals Milton had been taught to reverence in the last child of the Italian Renaissance. Here was a thoroughly congenial nature, informed by piety as sincere as his own, possibly inferior to himself in grandeur of soul and constancy of mind, but exhibiting the delicate charm, power over the supernatural, and quick susceptibility to the more latent influences of all objects animate and inanimate surrounding us, which distinguish the Augustan poet. This extreme delicacy of sensation, or rather of compassionate sympathy, was the one excellence in Milton's poetic endowment that nature seems to have supplied in somewhat limited measure—the seventh string left for the harpist himself to discover,

but which when found would immortalize his strain. The admission regarding Spenser recorded by Dryden, although probably intended to disguise the truth, was not disingenuous, and points surely enough to the fields in which this crowning grace was won. To assimilate the work of a fellow countryman up to the required degree would hardly have been prudent lest known peculiarities should accompany the gain. One "Night Raven" might be allowed to transfer his domicile, but if in addition the "Swans of Thames" had been lured from their true allegiance the obligation would have been too apparent. On the other hand, Tasso stands exactly at a convenient distance ; little known to the mass of English readers, yet not like Ovid, separated from the writer by a radically divergent faith and sociology ; nor indeed by any lingual obstruction of importance. The Italians, like the English, having in great measure got rid of the inflexion, and our own tongue admitting of Latinized forms of speech, thought travels easily from one idiom to the other and much of the style and manner may be preserved. How thoroughly Milton absorbed, and saturated himself with, the vital energies of his more readily impressionable, more *feminine*, more dulcet predecessor will be at once apparent to those familiar with *Paradise Lost* who read *Gerusalemme Liberata* ; but gleanings from Tasso's other poems, which are very numerous, frequently occur. The *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity* is clearly suggested by a Canzone on the same subject written in similar measure (short lines alternating with long), in which the classical divinities are treated with similar ingratitude—a treatment which, as Dr. Garnett justly observes, disaccords

with modern sentiment. The "patristic" exultation here shown in the overthrow of a mythology to which Tasso owed so much, pervades the whole of his poetry and is continually reproduced by Milton.

In considering this reverent regard for the example of Tasso, which began so early and was never abandoned, there can be little doubt that it had its origin in the schoolboy friendship with Charles Diodati, son of an exiled Genevese physician, whom Milton had met at St. Paul's School; and no fairer subject for pictorial effort could well be imagined than the two boys sitting together in the doctor's library or garden, their arms resting on one another's shoulders, after the manner of school friends, with a folio of the *Gerusalemme* on their knees, while the glittering pageant of Eastern fable, knightly daring, enchantment and classical lore is made to unfold itself before them apparently in subservience to a lofty enterprise in the cause of Christianity. This indeed was the "affable familiar" voice, the angelic teaching, which our 17th Century Adam listened to in his earliest years and had with him through life—the light in which he dwelt and which, under Divine grace, sustained him with the hope of endless fame through darkness, discouragement and disillusion.

In his account of his youthful studies, Milton admits a fondness for tales of Knight-errantry, but in Stewart times the mass of Arthurian and Carolingian fable, which Scott, Tennyson and many others have arranged so attractively, was extremely chaotic and only available in a properly

digested form through the Italian writers who followed in the steps of Bojardo. Of these writers many are so coarse that their books would hardly have been permitted in Huguenot and Puritan households. It therefore seems probable that Milton was familiar with Tasso long before Pulci, Berni, and Ariosto claimed his attention. This precedence, if granted, combined with natural affinity and the example of Spenser, who had similarly acquired Tasso's lighter characteristics, were all calculated to incline Milton to see in the court poet of Ferrara a model worthy his best endeavours to emulate. Like the Paduan and Bolognese Student, the *alumnus* of Cambridge became in after years an expert fencer, although he never seems to have owed personal safety to equal pre-eminence with sword and pen. Like his illustrious prototype, he unrolls before us the spectacle of a triumphant theology, with earlier forms of religious belief led captive in its train. Like Tasso, to whom it was given to say almost the last word of the *revived learning* in Italy, Milton also stands as the latest representative of the *English Renaissance*, and it is interesting to note that from his lips, as from those of his equally inspired forerunner, we gather the same message of unhesitating religious belief.

IV.

With regard to the unfinished work on the Creation, nothing further need here be said, but a few extracts from the *Gerusalemme*, taken very much at haphazard, may be added to show the kind of influence exercised by Tasso's earlier work. In all cases, as might be expected, Milton adds immensely to the power and dignity of the thought, retaining

at the same time the easy movement and beauty of the original ; but certain organic resemblances clearly prove the descent. This is particularly apparent in the second example cited, which owes less to the model than the others, but in which the objects named and sequence of thought are identical. It is one well calculated to sustain Sir Joshua Reynolds' contention that, by working on ground thus prepared for him, a great artist can carry his conceptions to heights otherwise unattainable and so justify the process of adoption.

With a nice sense of his own claims, but with generous recognition of merit wherever shown, Tasso is reported to have said, when news of the success of *Pastor Fido* was brought to him : " If Guarini had not seen the *Aminta*, he would not have excelled it." The marshalling of his own thoughts and fancies among the forces of one whom the world looks on as his most formidable competitor in epic poetry, would unquestionably have furnished a yet more trying occasion for magnanimity, could he have foreseen it ; but there is little reason to suppose that he would not have welcomed the spiritual union thus tendered. Great writers have ever shown a tendency to speak in riddles, and conceal in their work some curious detail relative to their own experiences. Unlike other poets, Milton seems never to have given his whole heart to any woman, yet this could not have been because he was incapable of a great affection. The unattainableness of his own ideal may possibly be considered a sufficient explanation, yet others with equally high ideals have fared differently. Bearing in mind the highly charged atmosphere in which all great poetic conceptions

are evolved, the view he may have taken concerning himself seems vaguely indicated in the curious passage relating to the sexless affinities of unembodied spirits with which the angel Raphael brings his visit to a close. Other passages also suggest a distinct consciousness of extra-terrestrial visitation. Spenser had believed himself mystically associated with Chaucer, to whom he owed little ; why should not Milton, whose pride under ordinary circumstances would have revolted at such continued dependence on the guidance and support of another mind, however exalted (for there is little doubt he could, in the maturity of his powers, have dispensed with this aid had he chosen) have believed himself in nightly intelligence with this "twin splendour" whose faculties, so far as they were not a counterpart, seemed the complement of his own ?

Let those skilled in divination decide ; but in any case the theme should be of interest to any who care to watch the methods of

" those spirits, not unblest,
Who work in fire and joyously create."

That the study of these methods is no vain occupation needs little proof. Had Browning acquired the gift of melody from Petrarch how differently would he now be regarded !

B. I., STANZA 2.

O Musa, tu, che di caduchi allori
Non circondi la fronte in Elicona
Ma su nel cielo

T.

O heavenly muse, that not with fading bays
Deckest thy brows by th' Heliconian spring.

F.

Sing, heavenly muse

M.

B. II., STANZA 96.

Era la notte allòr ch'alto riposo
Han l'onde e i venti, e pareva muto il mondo.
Gli animai lassi

T.

Now spread the night her spangled canopy,
And summoned every restless eye to sleep :
On beds of tender grass the beasts down lye,
The fishes slumber in the silent deep,
Unheard was serpent's hiss and dragon's cry,
Birds left to sing and Philomene to weep ;
Only that noise heaven's rolling circles kest
Sang lullaby, to bring the world to rest.

F.

Now came still evening on, and twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad ;
Silence accompanied ; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale,
She

M.

B. VII., STANZA 52.

Qual con le chiome sanquinosse orrende
Splendor cometa
. infuasta luce

T.

. from his horrid hair
Shakes pestilence

M.

B. IX.

God looking down, sees the fiends assisting the Infidels * ' against the Crusaders. He calls Michael, and says :—

STANZA 58.

. Non vedi or come s'armi
Contra la mia fedèl diletta greggia
L'empia schiera d'Averno

T.

Him God beholding from his prospect high
Thus to his only Son forseeing spake :
. Seest thou what rage
Transports our adversary ? &c. . . .

M.

The stanzas immediately following have contributed a good deal :

- “ Fit house for them, the house of grief and pain.”
- “ A falling star so glideth down from heaven.”
- “ Where heat and cold, dryness and moisture strive.”
- “ Have you not learned yet to know and fear
The Lord's just wrath, and thunder's dreadful stroke ? ”

Fairfax's translation.

B. XII., STANZA 77.

Temerò me medesimo, e, da me stesso
Sempre fuggendo, avrò me sempre appresso

T.

Swift from myself I run, myself I fear,
Yet still my hell within myself I bear.

F.

An instance of the thought being carried further by
the translator.

B. XIII., STANZA 28.

O quanti appájon mostri armati in guarda
Degli alti merli, e in che terribil faccia !
De' quai con occhi biechi altri il riguarda
E dibattendo l'arme altri il minaccia.

T.

With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms.

M.

B. XVI., STANZA 21.

L'uno di servitù, l'altra d'impero
Si gloria ; ella in se stessa, ed egli in lei.

T.

The one in servitude, the other in empire
Gloried ; *she* in herself and *he* in her.

H. C.

He for God only ; she for God in him.

M.

“DELLE DIFFERENZE POETICHE.”

Of these Discourses he said later :

“ I wished to seek the truth, to discover the straight path to poetical composition, from which modern poets have widely strayed and seeing many paths, all of them much frequented, I knew not yet which to follow, and, discussing the matter with myself, observed the fate of other travellers where the roads parted in order to ascertain the best. It was, then, for my own guidance and training that I wrote these Discourses, now submitted to the judgment of others for the purpose of advising thereon.”

Wishing to write an epic poem Tasso considers that the subject should be historical and *religious in accordance with the real belief of the poet* ; he discards blank verse in which *Trissino* had made an experiment, and approves the variety and comprehensiveness of *Ariosto*, at the same time giving due weight to *Trissino's* argument in favour of unity of action. Then taking as a perfect model the divine work of creation, in which the oneness of the whole is seen to be consistent with infinite variety of detail, he thus concludes :

“ I hold then that the excellent poet (who for no other reason shall be called *divine* but that in some measure he is able to assimilate his work to that of the Supreme Artificer whose divinity he comes to share) should as it were construct his poem in the likeness of a

little world : We should there read of royal ordinances and mighty armies, of battles by sea and land, of cities taken or burnt, of skirmishes and single encounters ; descriptions of tournaments and rich caparisons ; of tempests and prodigies. In such a poem should be unfolded the deliberations of celestial and infernal councils ; incantations, seditions ; discord, wandering and adventure. We should witness acts of daring and generosity, courtesy and cruelty ; incidents of fortunate and unfortunate love, now moving to joy, now to pity. But nevertheless, in its essence, *one* must be the poem containing this variety of matter, *one* the form, *one* the fable. And all these things bound together with due regard to each other, each corresponding with the others, each necessarily or apparently depending upon the others ; so that, a single part altered or removed, the whole falls in ruin.”

Here we have the entire *Gerusalemme* revealed to the mind of Torquato when, in the first flush of youth and vigour, he proudly claimed his share in divinity because he felt himself a poet.*

Vita de Tasso, p. 122.

ANGELO SOLERTI.

*Compare *Reason of Church Government*, Milton's Prose Works, the passage beginning "Time serves not," quoted in Masson's *Life*, B. II., p. 119.

Masson's comment is very similar to Solerti's.

IL MONDO CREATO being a somewhat scarce book in this country, a short extract is here added.

525. Ne le tenebre allor dè' ciechi abissi
Lo spirito divino, e sovra l'acque
Era portato, e l'umida natura
Già preparava. Anch'ei presente a l'opra
Spirando già forza e virtude a l'onda,
D'ucello in guisa, che da frale scorza
Col suo caldo vital covata e piena,
Trae non pennato 'l figlio, e quasi informe :
E disse : fatta sia la luce, ed opra
Fu 'l detto, al comandar del Padre eterno.
Ma'l suo parlar, suon di snodata lingua,
Nè percossa fu già che l'aria imprima
Di sè medesima e di sua voce informi,
Ma del santo voler, ch'a l'opre inchina,
Quell' inchinarsi è la parola interna.

540. Così la prima voce e'l primo impero
Del gran Padre del Ciel creò repente
La chiarissima, pura e bella luce,
Che fu prima raccolta, e poi divisa
E'n più lumi distinta 'l quarto giorno.
Sgombrò l'orror, le tenebre disperse,
Illustrò da più lati il cieco Mondo,
Manifestò del cielo il dolce aspetto,
Rivelò con serena, alma sembianza
L'altre forme leggiadre . . .

(Solerti's Edition.)

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Later works, rendered into English verse



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